

Thesis

on

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by

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In this attempt to set down a few thoughts, in regard to the relation of surgery to Homoeopathy, we would first glance briefly at the position which it has occupied in the past, & which it now occupies in relation to the practice of Medicine in general.

Formerly, especially in the old world, there was little or no connection between; But the surgeon was a sort of scientific butcher, who was neither required or expected to know much, if anything, of medicine. He was unrefined in his art, and to a great degree unscientific. His distinctions were by no means nice; But the surgeon, was to the physician, what the undertaker was to the surgeon; a very convenient scape-goat for his sins of ignorance and carelessness. When the man of physic failed with his Plasters & purges - his Leeches & Lotions,



to deprive the unfortunate patient of life, the  
chirurgian, thirsting for blood, would usually  
quickly succeed in consigning him to the  
care of the undertaker who generously concealed  
beneath the sod, the miserable journey work  
of his allies. In the progress of events, however,  
as the world advanced in science and the  
arts, and humanity gradually rose to a  
higher level, greater perfection in the healing  
art was demanded, as well as in all others,  
and as the result, surgery became wedded  
to Medicine. It was to a great extent elevated  
and purified by the alliance. No one has ever  
pretended to doubt the propriety of this  
marriage. It is now conceded by all medical  
authorities that the professions of Medicine  
and surgery should not be disunited;  
But the physician should always be a surgeon,



and the surgeon should always be a physician.  
Old school practitioners adopt, and act upon  
this doctrine, and the lines of distinction, are  
nearly if not quite obliterated, at least in this  
country. It is true & always will be true that some  
men, owing to peculiarity of taste and talent,  
make one or the other branch a specialty.  
But no intelligent and conscientious allopath  
feels warranted in establishing himself as  
a responsible physician, in any commun-  
ity unless he is able creditably to perform  
any surgical operation, which in general  
practice the physician is called upon to do.  
In the country these operations must be  
performed by himself; But in the city, while  
understanding when the interference of the  
surgeon is necessary, and also what is  
required to be done, he may, if he chooses



call for the assistance of his colleague who makes it a specialty. The medical treatment of both being the same, the patient loses nothing by the transfer. Of course we are now referring to allopathic physicians of respectability and good standing: many of them, we will know, are a disgrace to both surgery and practice, viewed even from an old school standpoint.

Since the era in the history of surgery, the beginning of which, was marked by its first alliance to medicine, it has been slowly but steadily rising on the scale of refinement and scientific perfection, till, at the present day, in comparison with what it was, it has come to be a noble and beneficent calling.

Then the surgeon's ambition was to perform the most daring and heroic feats of his art: and like the ambitious warrior he sighed



for new fields of slaughter, as the path to glory  
& renown. But he has grown more & more  
conservative, until now he, who would gain  
the applause of the profession, strives to make  
the knife most subservient to medicine.

Great progress has been made, but still the  
goal is not reached. Still the plundering  
empirics of the old school, are often found  
to use the knife to hide their ignorance of  
the science of cure.

We have seen, by the foregoing  
casual glance, what surgery was in the hands  
of the medically uneducated man, and what  
it now is in the hands of the allopathic  
profession. Let us next consider to what  
extent the knife may be dispensed with by  
the medical world; doubtless to a far greater  
than has yet been seen. The day is, we may



hope, not very far distant, when its sphere of  
action will be vastly diminished; and he  
who can cure disease of body or of limb, most  
promptly & thoroughly by scientific medical  
treatment, will be most in demand and  
most honored by the profession & the people at  
large. But, while the law of gravitation prevails,  
and the busy, bustling, jostling world moves on,  
and humanity breaks its arms and legs,  
dislocates its joints, and is mangled  
by the destructive missiles of war, just so long  
will the knife and other surgical appliances  
be required. Our noble healing art cannot  
wholly dispense with the knife & the splint.  
They are positively essential to the proper  
conservation of human health and life.  
In further considering this self evident  
proposition, the question arises, to whose hands



do the interests of humanity & the honor of  
the medical profession require that the knife  
should be entrusted. We have seen what it  
is in the hands of the empirics & now ask  
what disposition shall be made of it for the  
future. Shall we as Homoeopaths, who  
claim to be, and are, true reformers in medicine,  
take no interest in the reformation & purification  
of this indispensable part of medical science?  
While we so earnestly strive to save poor  
diseased humanity from the poisonous  
drugging, and merciless dredging of the  
empirics, shall we with indifference leave  
them to their, still far too pitiless knife?  
In other words, have homoeopaths  
a right, or can they afford to turn their  
backs upon surgery? Is true that homoeo-  
pathic medicine is far more independent



of the Omnip, than allopathies have chance of.  
Mr, it is well known, cure very many diseases,  
which they call local, & consign without  
hesitation to the surgeon, by constitutional  
treatment. We indeed claim that no disease  
is local. The moment morbid symptoms manifest  
themselves in any part of the body, we know  
that there is morbid action at the seat of life,  
and the Omnip is unavailing to effect a  
radical cure. The tumor which they must extirpate  
by the use of mechanical means, alone, we often  
cause to disappear under the action of the  
properly selected remedy. The abscess, into which  
they are fair, at first sight, to plunge the bistoury,  
we may many times relieve by the magical  
action of the pulsat. The inflamed and congested  
eye, which they barbarously torture with their  
cruel caustics, readily & kindly yields to a rational



homoeopathic treatment. While they are swabbing  
and boring out the throat of their victims, the  
true homoeopathician prevents, or speedily relieves  
the diseased throat by the operation of the only  
true law of cure. The poor female who is fainting  
with loss of blood, which flows from the  
uncontracted uterus, is drugged at one end, and  
plugged at the other. If the patient's nerves  
are diseased, they burn furrows in the region  
of the spinal column, with the white hot iron.  
Local inflammation is combatted by them, with  
blister, leeches, setons, caustics, or the horrible  
actual cautery. A treatment barbarous  
enough, one would think, to cause a  
man of any refinement of feeling to leave  
his profession in disgust. In these and  
numerous other diseases the true homoeopathician  
discards the knife & all their coarse and brutal.



appliances and relies with confidence upon the  
disposer and insignificant pellet. And yet  
there is a manifest limit to the power of this  
wonderful globule. It cannot dress a fractured  
arm, or properly adjust a broken thigh, and  
give to the patient, unaided by surgery a sound  
and symmetrical limb. It will never answer  
instead of splints and bandages. It cannot  
search out and extract the deeply buried rifle  
ball. Dislocations are not reduced by internal  
medicinal treatment. In this, and many other  
cases, it of course is of no avail, save as a valuable  
adjutant to proper surgical appliances.

It would hardly seem necessary to repeat such  
self evident facts, were it not true that some  
homoeopaths seem to be so absorbed in the  
study of medicinal action, and place such  
unlimited reliance upon it, as to become



apparently oblivious to the plainest teachings of  
common sense, and thus bring our truly noble  
science in to dispute among the people, who  
are ever inclined to take a practical view of  
our profession as of all other things. If we  
evidently claim too much for our remedies,  
they will be very apt to concede nothing to them.

It may be said, we should ever follow the truth  
and practice our art according to true principles,  
regardless of the estimation in which we may be  
held; having higher and nobler motives of action  
than merely a desire for popularity. Far be it  
from us to deny this position, or to attempt to  
detract from it in the least degree. But while  
we are bound to adhere unflinchingly to the  
truth, regardless of fame, are we not under  
equal obligation, to preserve that truth from  
being needlessly cast into contempt? This



we are guilty of doing; however, whenever we attempt to make the practice of our science violate the plainest teachings of the rational understanding. To illustrate our meaning, a single example may be cited; viz: a homoeopathic physician is called to attend a lady, suffering from great pain swelling and lameness in the vicinity of the ankle joint. He sits down, and drawing forth his ever ready paper and pencil, notes carefully each symptom of the case from top to toe, and prescribes the indicated remedy. He does not diagnose the case; according to his understanding of the teachings of Hahnemann, he has nothing to do with pathology. Given the symptoms of the disease on the one hand, and the representative remedy on the other, and the patient must recover, he argues. But in this case the patient does not recover.



The limb remains deformed and useless, and after many weeks of suffering, the lady sends for an old school doctor, who, "understands his business", and he at once diagnoses a dislocated ankle joint & reduces it.

This is not a fancy sketch, and such disgraceful incidents are constantly happening in the practice of homoeopaths.

How often does the homoeopathic obstetrician, as soon as he finds himself in charge of a case of labor requiring instrumental interference, forthwith send for his allopathic colleague, who applies the forceps with a will, and the dear people are convinced, that it takes an allopathic doctor to help them out, when any thing serious is the matter. The fact that so eminent an obstetrician as our beloved and honored professor of that chair, was



anxiously inquired of by an intelligent family  
who had previously had allopathic attendance,  
as to what should be done, if the lady under  
his medical care, should require the  
introduction of the catheter; supposing that he  
could not be expected to be acquainted with  
the manipulation of that important instrument.  
Simply because he was a homoeopath, is a  
marked attestation of the low estimation  
in which the surgical skill of physicians of  
our school is held. This would not be so, had  
homoeopaths shown themselves equal in surgical  
skill to physicians of the empirical school,  
as they ought to have done. As before remarked,  
we would not deviate from the path of duty, for  
the sake of popularity, but we act, according  
to the dictates of our judgment and conscience,  
for the best interest of the patient, regardless



of the ungrateful returns and want of appreciation  
we may receive at their hands; and yet we should  
perhaps error the people right, if we were  
occasionally to do a little unnecessary  
hacking, just to show them we know how it  
is done. But still we should remember the people  
are not to blame. If a large proportion of our  
practitioners shun surgery wholly, or show  
themselves inadequate to it, we must not find  
fault if we are judged accordingly, even though,  
in consequence of our deficiency in this  
department, they withhold our judgment  
in other branches of our profession.

We cannot afford, neither have we a right to  
ignore this indispensable science. We are the  
conservators of the only true practice of  
medicine; and should also be of its  
wedded comort surgery. We have no right



to attempt their divorce; they belong together  
under all systems of medicine, and much  
more under ours. This would seem to be an  
unnecessary assertion; as the very existence  
of the chair of surgery in our colleges, would  
seem to be prima facie evidence that it  
is considered by our school as an indispensable  
ally of medicine. Nevertheless the fact remains  
that Homoeopaths are notoriously unskilled  
in surgery; and the principal reason is  
found in the light estimation in which  
it is held by them. Our professors of other  
chairs lose no opportunity to sneer at the  
use of the knife. "The pellet, the pellet they say  
is omnipotent." Surgery is our shame, and  
the knife a disgrace to him who uses it."  
A manifest falsity, and contradiction of  
self evident facts. It is not surgery but the



abuse of surgery that disgraces the profession. This distinction is not made sufficiently clear, by our teachers, and the students of our colleges to a great degree, imbibe a disgust for surgery and many of them enter practice with the determination to have as little as possible to do with it. They follow the teachings of its professor, simply that they may be able to pass a creditable examination before him in the green room. This is not as it should be. Instead of standing aloof from surgery, leaving it in the hands of those who not only abuse it, but also abuse us by means of it, & bring us into contempt in the eyes of the world, thereby greatly curtailing our influence and the spread of homoeopathy, we should come boldly forward and grasp the knife; and while we teach them how to



dispute with its use when not needed,  
also show them how gracefully and  
scientifically to use it when resort to it is  
required. Let no Homoeopathician, be guilty  
of having forced upon him the necessity of  
calling upon his empirical colleagues to  
do his instrumental work. If we must  
have surgeons, and the necessity will not  
be denied, let them be men who understand  
just where to draw the line between medicine  
& the knife; and he alone can properly define  
that point who is capable of exhausting the  
curative power of medicine in its truly  
scientific application. It may be true that  
in many cases the allopathic doctor can be  
allowed to consult his taste, and choose  
whether to make one or other branch of the  
profession a speciality; but it can hardly



in any case, be permissible for the Homoeopath to do, because he so uniformly stands alone in the community where he practices, and must either do his own surgery or leave it to the empirics. And yet the latter alternative, is almost universally adopted even in our large cities. In the name of common sense and economy, if Homoeopathicism cannot do their own surgery, let the force of teaching it in our colleges be discontinued, and the whole attention of students be devoted to that branch of our art which they are expected to practice. We should be jealous for the honor of Homoeopathy, and stand by ourselves, - dependent upon no one to do for us, any duty which ever devolves upon the physician to perform, under the broadest definition of his sphere of action. If we are content to submit, this,



Which truly, is not the most agreeable part of  
our duty, the people will not force it upon us,  
but contemptuously turn to the "scientific  
men of the old school," leaving us, as they  
facetiously remark, "to doctor the babies &  
ladies who play sick." Let it be the purpose  
of each homoeopathician to disabuse the  
minds of the community of this, which  
ought to be erroneous idea, and teach them  
by example that we are in nothing inferior  
to, or dependant upon the empirics; but  
are able in all things pertaining to our  
profession, to maintain an honorable position.

Never forgetting that the art of healing by  
the beautiful law, bequeathed to us by the  
great founder of homoeopathy, is the noblest  
part of our calling; ever striving for a pure  
and more comprehensive knowledge of



medicine, that we may thus make ourselves  
truly benefactors of our kind.

Then we shall  
not only conquer and banish disease  
of the body, but do much to elevate and  
nobilitate the race. Disease is the fruit of the  
curse which sin has entailed upon  
humanity; and may we not therefore by  
an inverse process, by healing the diseases  
of the body do much to cure the  
degradation of the soul.